

The Southern Yarn

October/November 2020

NEWSLETTER OF THE DOWN UNDER CLUB OF WINNIPEG INC.

downundercalendar

OCTOBER

Annual not-so-formal Dinner

Cancelled due to COVID-19

NOVEMBER

*Annual General Meeting
7 pm Friday, November 27th, 2020*

This year, due to COVID-19 restrictions on gatherings, the AGM be conducted via Zoom. Provision will also be made for phone-in participation, for those without a computer. Details will be communicated to members closer to the date.

DECEMBER

Family Christmas Party

Cancelled due to COVID-19

Thank you for your patience...

...as members of the Down Under Club of Winnipeg, as we all make adjustments to rules relating to the Covid-19 Pandemic, and all the risks associated with gatherings. The DUCW executive will continue to monitor rules and risks, and reschedule and/or adapt our activities accordingly. We trust that your connections in New Zealand and Australia are well, and that you are staying in touch to compensate for any travel plans that might have been impacted. Stay healthy!



DUCW members and friends met for an August afternoon of golf.



The Annual Golf Tournament

We held our annual Tournament on a very pleasant Saturday afternoon in late August at "The Players" course. There were 10 of us in all, and it was a great day for everyone. Three teams suited up, and the dominant team led by Peter and Tim Debenham, along with first timers Tom and Bruce, came in first. Charlie, Terry and Kyle tied with Peter M, Peter G and Ricky for the "Participant" ribbons.

Prize for longest drive went to Tim D with a monster hit on the 4th hole, while Peter M picked the right club to come up with closest-to-the-pin honours.

We gathered at the 19th hole for refreshments and prize ceremony, and everyone committed to do it all again next year.

Peter Munn

Vale Ken Clark, DUCW Life Member ...

CLARK, Kenneth Wyllie (Ken). S/No. 43989 RNZAF Flying Off. WWII Doctor of Agronomy and Professor in Grasses (Manitoba, Canada). Loved husband of the late Leila. Loved Dad of Diane and Denny, and Derek and their families (Canada). Loved husband of Lexie and step-father of Irene, Alex, George, Ron, Heather and families. Respected and loved by all who knew him.

Messages for Ken's family can be sent C/o PO Box 1055, Napier 4140. Dunstall's Funeral Services FDANZ Napier Ph 06 8357196 [Published in The New Zealand Herald on Sept. 16, 2020]

Lexie still lives in NZ, and the club has sent her and the family a card of condolence.



editorially yours

Charlie Powell



Curse you little COVID-19 virus!

Because of you I am having to write this editorial and put this *Yarn* together in my "office" at home! Again!

I should be in my real office, in Dunder Place – up there on the 7th floor, overlooking the scenic fall-colored canopy of Winnipeg, watching the zippy Slap-Dash water taxis criss-crossing the Red River.

I wouldn't have to be emailing and phoning and zooming back and forth with Brian, Peter and Jenny – we'd just emerge from our offices and chat at the water-cooler or over coffee in the boardroom.

And I would be more professional.

And my assistant Editor wouldn't have to wake me up from day-dreaming and snap me back to reality!

Curse you little COVID virus!

Not to mention a much-anticipated, once-in-a-century, family celebration in Canberra set for this month. Curse you little COVID virus!

On the other hand, ZOOM, Facetime, Skype, Line, WhatsApp, etc., work great for staying connected; and home offices do have some advantages, especially for bird-watchers. Thanks to COVID, our ranks have grown! If wildlife, ecosystems, sustainability, etc., get more attention, appreciation and action – that's a good thing. As Catherine Bowering advised/quoted in the previous issue (*Locked down in Lilydale*): "Always look on the bright side of life".

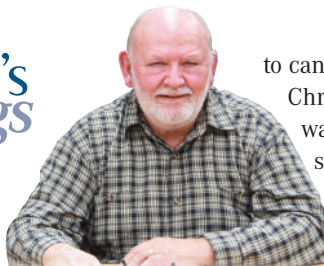
As some parents are now having to navigate home/remote schooling, it brought to mind Australia's pioneering of School of the Air – see *Getting to know*, p.5.

Thanks again to all who contribute to the Yarn – especially our consistent advertisers; and Jenny, for highlighting them (p.3).

Stay safe!

president's ramblings

Peter Munn



Hi there from me. It has been a different and difficult last 6 months for all of us. Like you, I have been following all the smart suggestions to stay healthy, and with the COVID infection rate rising in Manitoba, it is a good time to do that. The Club, like many others, has pulled back on most usual activities, with the golf tournament the only event organized over the last 6 months.

The Board recently had a meeting to discuss the next three usual events, the annual "Not so Formal" dinner, the Annual General Meeting, and the Christmas Party. With the present situation, it was reluctantly decided

to cancel the annual dinner, as well as the Christmas Party. Not what we would have wanted to do under normal circumstances.

Regarding the Annual General Meeting, we voted to run it using ZOOM, i.e., as a remote, call-in meeting, allowing us to still get together remotely, with zero contact. For those who don't know of ZOOM, it is used as a remote, login video meeting program, and is super easy to use. You simply respond to the link in an email request to join the meeting, and all participants will appear on your PC or phone/tablet with audio/video.

You will be receiving a letter shortly from me with more details on the AGM and ZOOM, as well as our usual membership renewals.

In the meantime, take care,
Peter

Our Bushfire Fundraiser

If you haven't had a chance yet to watch the video from our bushfire fundraiser back in February, now is the perfect time. You can watch:

- the bushfire video only at www.youtube.com/watch?v=FGxVZuTuyhM&t=7s
- all three videos on our YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/channel/UCNDsQmp5y_v_Kuzw2jwP7VQ

As of today, the bushfire video has had 107 views and 7 likes, and our channel has 15 subscribers. We are looking for more subscribers – 100 in total – so we can get a dedicated channel name for the DUCW. So please VIEW, LIKE and SUBSCRIBE – and share the links with your friends and family here and around the world.

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Helping Out Our Mates

How is everyone doing in these different times? With new social distancing restrictions in Manitoba, it means that each of us will continue to be affected in one way or another for quite a while yet.

As Peter Munn says in his column, there unfortunately won't be any in-person Club events until at least next year, although we will be holding our AGM on ZOOM. I wonder what Gord would have thought about that!?

Our advertisers, as well as local businesses with which we are affiliated, are also facing challenges in these uncertain times. And that is why over the next two issues, we want to remind you about the services they provide in case you – or someone you know – are able to support them.

In this issue, we are focusing on our advertisers.

Downunder Travel in Calgary – as a partner of the DUCW, Downunder Travel has been helping us with our travel plans for more than 10 years. Many of us have booked our adventures with Jason and his team, and while it's difficult to imagine any travelling

at all right now, you can still get in contact with them so you'll be good and ready when borders open up again. In the meantime, you might also be interested in Jason's newest venture – Petzabulous, fabulous pet supplies for your bestie. Whether it's for your travel plans or for your pets, call Jason at **1-866-664-6989** or visit downunder-travel.com and petzabulous.com.

Kiwi Installations and Sales – as a supporter of the DUCW, Kiwi Installations has been busy fitting homes, businesses and

cottages with rolling security shutters for the past 20 years. Based in Winnipeg, they can also help with fencing and decking needs during the summer months, and most recently started selling and installing Humphrey windows. For a free consultation, contact Terry at 204-229-6642 or visit www.kiwiinstallations.com.

William Pooley Legal Services – as a supporter of the DUCW, William Pooley Legal Services will come to you in order to provide a variety of law services at your place of convenience. Services include estate law, wills, civil litigation and elder law. To set up an appointment today, contact William at **204-783-1632**.

In the next issue, we'll list other businesses here in Winnipeg that we have supported in the past, as well as businesses owned by Club members. If you would like to be included in that list, we need the following information:

- the name of your business
- website or Facebook link
- phone number
- a two-line write-up about the services you provide.

You can email all that to info@downunderclub.mb.ca by Friday November 27 for inclusion in the December/January issue.

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Threatened or threatening?

[UQ News, Alex Jiang and Dominic Jarvis, 25 Sep 2020] Far from being harmless herbivores, cows across Australia could be trampling koalas to death, a University of Queensland researcher says.

UQ PhD candidate Alex Jiang is investigating how damaging cows can be to koala populations, conducting field research at Spicers Hidden Vale property near Grandchester.

“For years veterinarians, farmers and wildlife carers across Australia have been reporting serious injury or death of koalas due to cow trampling,” Mr Jiang said.

“This is largely based on animal autopsy evidence, mainly finding hoof prints on dead koala bodies – they’re clearly acting aggressively to these poor animals.

“There are witness statements from farmers confirming that cattle have been seen chasing koalas in paddocks.

“And it seems that, while koala populations are in significant decline due to deforestation and urbanisation, a substantial number of koala habitats are either bordering or overlapping cattle grazing land.

“We’re keen to better understand the interactions between cattle and koalas, in order to work out the likelihood and frequency of such incidents.”

Mr Jiang said the use of a plush toy koala riding a remote control car was probably one of the study’s more creative methods for gathering data. [link]



But don’t you try it! ...

[ABC News, Lauren Roberts and Henry Zwartz, 17 Sep 2020] Crocodile Wrangler Matt Wright has sparked controversy over a video he posted on Instagram of him getting friendly with a 4-metre crocodile called Bonecruncher.

In the video, the large saltie, which is missing part of its lower jaw, can be seen to move towards Mr Wright who places his hand on the end of its nose while looking to the camera.

Speaking to ABC News Breakfast, Mr Wright said he had known ‘Bonecruncher’ for ‘many years’ and the croc had a ‘placid’ nature.

“It’s a great relationship we’ve built with Bonecruncher, but I do not want to set an example where people think they can get befriend a crocodile. This is something special,” he said.

“He hangs out in the shallows and he’s quite placid and we’ve built this relationship over time, where he’s not that aggressive.”

Mr Wright said he had known the animal for about six years and had seen him physically change over time after fighting with other crocodiles.

“When I first met him he had his full jaw he had another eye and most of his tail, but over the years I’ve seen him get into different areas during the wet season and get into strife,” he said.

Mr Wright said he did not want members of the public to follow his example and get close to crocodiles.

“I don’t want to set an example that you can just go and play with a saltwater croc. It’s pretty unusual that this crocodile has this persona about him.” [Link]



Carpal tunnel (unless you stop ‘em)

[ABC, Jonathon Poulson and Jessica Schremer, 19 Sep 2020] Freshwater turtles could be the solution to keeping the Murray-Darling clean and helping eradicate carp from the river system. A study by Western Sydney University researchers has revealed that turtle scavenging can remove fish carcasses from the water five times faster than natural decomposition.

It also has found that if turtles are reintroduced, they will dramatically improve the river’s water quality by eating the fish carcasses before they begin to rot.

Western Sydney University ecologist Ricky Spencer said turtles played a particularly important role in cleaning up waterways after fish-kill events.

“They love to eat and are always asking for food like fish and meat so they are really important in terms of cleaning up rivers of any dead fish,” Mr Spencer said.

The study was initially conducted to help conserve biodiversity in the river system.

But it has found that replenishing the number of turtles could be a significant cost-saving measure in the National Carp Control Plan – colloquially known as “carpeggeddon” – which would see carp herpes used as a biological control agent. [Link]



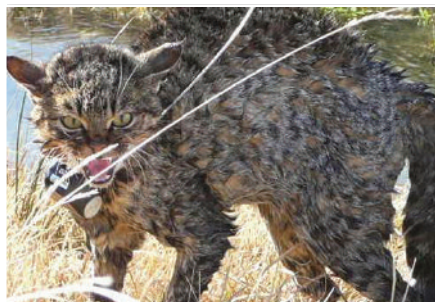
Vale Dean Jones: Legend passes away aged 59

[Cricket.com.au: Sam Ferris, 24Sep2020]

“Although many remember him for his brilliance in the 50-over game, arguably Jones’ finest moment in the national team came in scorching conditions in Chennai in 1986, where his selfless and courageous innings of 210 helped Australia to a famous tie against India.

“Jones remained an immensely popular figure in Australian and Victorian cricket throughout his life and was a much-loved columnist and commentator in every corner of the cricketing world.

“This is a truly sad day. Deano’s loss will be felt not just at home in Australia, but across the globe. Our thoughts and best wishes are with his wife Jane and daughters Isabella and Phoebe.” [Link]



Bigfootpaw ...

[NZHerald, 27 Sep 2020] For more than 50 years the presence of wild puma-like cats in the South Island has been a keenly debated topic, but a Twizel-based Department of Conservation (DoC) officer remains sceptical.

Two sightings of “monstrous” cats earlier this month in North Canterbury have again reignited the mystery and speculation.

One possum hunter has vowed never to go into the bush alone again after encountering a cat that he estimated to be about 2m long, Stuff has reported. That would make it about the same size as a puma.

Over the years there have been sightings of big cats in Canterbury, Otago, Southland and Marlborough.

Last year, there were reports of a big black animal close to Fairlie.

Department of Conservation biodiversity officer Dean Nelson has been based in Twizel for several years and is familiar with big cat sightings in the region.

He said he remains a bit sceptical, although that could change if he ever sees one himself.

“The issue for me is that the sightings have been in a whole lot of different places over many years and how do these animals remain concealed the rest of the time?”

Nelson said if big cats were there it would be likely to see more reports in one place, or signs of their presence such as sheep kills or the like.

A number of the sightings have been at times when there are low light levels or at night which can change a person’s perception of size, he said.

“We know we catch just over 7kg feral cats, but that’s not quite the size that some of these people are talking about.” [Link]



Hey Jacko, ya missed one, again! ...

[Gisborne Herald, Murray Robertson, 24Sep2020] “Shrek 2” has been found living in a forestry block adjoining Wairakaia Station at Muriwai and the long, woolly beast of a sheep will feature at the Spring Show.

The Gisborne Shrek rivals the Merino wether found on Bendigo Station near Tarras in Otago in the South Island that gained international fame in 2004.

The original Shrek avoided the muster and the shearer for six years.

Rob Faulkner, from Wairakaia, said the Gisborne Shrek had eluded him for around five years by living in a forestry block alongside the station.

“Every attempt we made in the past to muster the animal failed. Over time sheep like it become a bit feral and get very cunning,” Rob said. “A few weeks ago it got into the back paddock and I realised just what a magnificent sheep it was.”

Rob said he has not yet been able to tell if it’s a he or a she. [Link]

Other news from NZ ...

I recently heard from **Pat McGrath**, DUCW member now back in NZ and former cricket teammate.

“We are all good here. ... I am on the committee of the Canadian Club here in Auckland. We have a pancake breakfast, a thanksgiving dinner, a quiz night and a summer BBQ. That’s all but we do get a good turnout at these events - 90 people at our breakfast. Take care. Regards, Pat.”

(Maybe here in Winnipeg, we should try a pancake breakfast with the club when restrictions ease to permit such radical frivolity. – annoyous contributor.)



BushYarn

A Yank soldier “put one up” on a Digger about a famous echo in America.

“If one were to call out at 11:00 a.m., the echo wouldn’t be heard ‘till three o’clock that afternoon.”

“That’s nothing,” said the Digger. “Why, in Australia we sounded the bugle call in 1914, but youse blokes didn’t hear it until 1917.”

[Source: “Classic Bush Yarns, by Warren Fahey, 2001]

NZ Election – Saturday October 17

To stay up on all the pre-election buzz and get the results as soon as they are known, be sure to stay tuned to Radio New Zealand at <https://www.rnz.co.nz/> for things like:

- full election coverage at <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/election-2020>

- a lighter approach courtesy of the Citizen’s Notebook at <https://www.rnz.co.nz/programmes/the-citizens-handbook-election-special-2020>

There are other avenues, of course, like the New Zealand Herald – <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/> – and Stuff – <https://www.stuff.co.nz/> – as well as your family and friends in NZ.

80 years ago Remembering 'The Few'

[Source: Airforce Museum of New Zealand, SIMON MOODY, 4 Sep 2020]

The Battle of Britain in the summer of 1940 was one of the turning points of World War II. For five months, from June until October 1940, a small number of young fighter pilots of the Royal Air Force (RAF) struggled against the much larger German Luftwaffe for control of the skies over southern England. For the first time, Germany's march across Europe was halted.



A dog fight in the sky over St. Paul's Cathedral in London during the Battle of Britain.

The Fall of France in June 1940 and the evacuation of the British Army from Europe saw Great Britain standing alone. As Germany prepared to invade across the English Channel, RAF Fighter Command was the last line of defence. Fortunately, they were prepared. During the years before the war, their Commander, Air Chief Marshal Sir Hugh Dowding, had introduced defensive measures such as radar to give early warning of attack, backed up by observers of the Royal Observer Corps. A complex system of air defence command and control was also set up, integrated with this early warning to direct the Battle. Even though the Germans were close across the Channel, the squadrons of No. 11 Group Fighter Command, led by inspirational New Zealander Air Vice-Marshal Sir Keith Park, would have time to intercept them. Park's skill and intuition was critical to the RAF's ultimate victory.



The 'Defender of London' – New Zealander Air Vice-Marshal Sir Keith Park, whose role as commander of RAF Fighter Command's No. 11 Group was instrumental during the Battle of Britain.

Less than 3,000 RAF airmen fought in the Battle of Britain. 544 of them were killed. Over 700 would die in subsequent air operations during the war. On 20 August 1940, Churchill immortalised these men with the now famous words: "Never in the field of human conflict has so much been owed by so many to so few".



Hurricane pilot prepares his flying equipment before a flight, November 1940.

Around 80% of the Allied airmen in the Battle were from Great Britain; of the rest, which included other Commonwealth nations as well as enemy-occupied countries such as Poland and Czechoslovakia, 23% were from New Zealand. 133 Kiwi pilots, air gunners and observers took part, 20 of whom lost their lives, while others were wounded, and some were also captured as prisoners of war. Altogether, the New Zealanders destroyed 97 enemy aircraft, with some, such as Colin Gray and Brian Carbury, becoming aces.



Kiwi fighter aces Al Deere (left) and Colin Gray, both of whom fought in the Battle of Britain.

The fact that so many New Zealanders fought in it means the Battle of Britain has an important place in our nation's military aviation history. Every year the RNZAF commemorated the Battle through base open days, religious services and dinings-in. Even after the last New Zealand veteran passed away in 2017 and national commemorations ceased, the men and women of today's Air Force still honour and acknowledge those who fought and died facing immense odds on the other side of the world.



Group of pilots from Nos. 19 and 616 Squadron RAF pose with their dogs and a Spitfire at RAF Duxford, during the Battle of Britain, 1940. L-R: On wing; Brian Lane, 'Flash' the Alsatian, 'Grumpy' Unwin, 'Rangy' the Spaniel, Noel Brinsden (NZ). Standing; Bernard Jennings, Colin MacFie, Billy Burton, Philip Lackrone (American). Image ref PR8796a, RNZAF Official.

One of the last New Zealand veterans of the Battle, Keith Lawrence, summed up what motivated him and other Kiwis, in an interview late in his life:

Of course, it was terribly dangerous but why were you in a fighter for heaven's sake?... It was up to me, you know. I suppose you don't think about that, but it was inculcated, it was part of you. Yes, it was your duty to do it and you just got stuck in and did it.

[Link]

History of the School of the Air

[Source: Australian Children.com] Learning through correspondence is offered by School of the Air. The school offers early secondary education and primary education to children in Australia's remote locations. Regular schools are rarely built in these areas due to a low school-age population. Previously classes were conducted through radio network which was maintained by the Royal Flying Doctor Service. This technology has been replaced by internet technology which is faster and more efficient.



Royal Flying Doctor Service

Background

The first school of the Air was established at Alice Springs on 8th June 1951. The broadcasting team was led by Mr. Kissel who worked at Alice Springs Higher Primary School. The concept, trial and initial set up of the School of the Air was done by Adelaide Miethke. She was a Council member of the (FDS) Flying Doctor Service South Australia branch. In 1944 she suggested educational talks to be given to children via two-way radio in remote areas of Australia. Discussions were made by the Director of the Fly-



From two-way radios to digital video teleconferencing via satellite, the School of the Air has come a long way in its goal to reach as many children as possible in rural Australia.

ing Doctor Service Mr. Pitts and the Education Assistant Supervisor, Mr. Dodd at Alice Springs Higher Primary School (Mr. Dodd was the headmaster of the school) and Miss Miethke to set up the school. Special premises were built to offer equal education to children located in other areas of Australia. Radio Network was used to offer children education and broadcasts were made via HF Radio

Lessons

Initially, lessons were offered and students listened in without giving feedback, but to enhance the learning process question and answer sessions were introduced. Special lessons were prepared together with dramatizations in classrooms at the school to ensure the children got the best education at their disposal. In 1953 Miss Molly Ferguson took over as the leader of the broadcasting team. By 1954 a broadcast studio and an observation area were set up at the Anzac Hill High School. In 1958 Mrs. Stiller retired due to ill health, and her duties were taken over by Mrs. Nancy Barrett. Every week she visited as many stations as possible using



her own car and covering the same direction to ensure quality education services in the School of the Air were being offered. Her services were so well received by different residents of the outcast areas of Australia that the Commonwealth Government stepped in and provided vehicles and expenses for future patrols to improve the program.

Relevant Information

The Alice Springs School of the Air operates across 1,300,000 square kilometres of land. It currently has 120 students and 14 teachers who offer quality education services to various parts of the country. The School of the Air was the first to offer two-way radio broadcasts in the world, providing education to students in remote parts of Australia to enable face-to-face lessons to students who didn't live close to schools. Since 2006 the School incorporated satellite technology to conduct classes. This improved quality of education services being offered together with internet technology to provide the best learning experience to students located in remote areas of Australia.



Did you know ...

The Air Force Museum of New Zealand in Wigram, Christchurch, holds the national collection of the Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF).

The collection is very diverse and includes objects covering the early days of New Zealand military aviation both prior to World War I and during this major conflict; the interwar years which saw the formation of the RNZAF in 1937; New Zealanders who served with the Royal Air Force (RAF) and in other Allied air forces during World War II; the RNZAF's campaign in the Pacific; and the post-War period to the present day. The collection also includes objects from former enemy forces.

The collection is owned by the RNZAF Museum Trust Board and cared for by a full-time team of trained museum professionals. Admission is free.



birds*i*view...

by Charlie Powell

Egret

This year has been great for bird watching! And I have noticed that many more people have taken up the pastime, at least judging by the newbies posting on the Manitoba Birding – Bird and Wildlife Photography Facebook site.

Personally, I have come across several firsts (for me) – starting in the early Spring with the American woodcock (see in the June *Yarn*). Perhaps I will introduce the others in the next *Yarn*, but this month I want to mention the egret. One of my favourite birds in Australia is the cattle egret – that symbiosis they share with the cattle.

I was very surprised and excited when I heard rumours that egrets had been sighted around Winnipeg. I had never seen one in Manitoba and always assumed that they didn't come this far north, although their big cousin, the great blue heron, can often be seen here (see January 2018 *Yarn*). In fact, my *Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Birds* indicates that all the egret species avoid Canada.

After checking out some of the nearby larger retention (snow-melt) ponds, we finally hit the jackpot on the banks of the Red River, where the floodway starts, south of the city. The river level was such that both banks had rocky outcrops exposed and shallow enough that the birds could spot the fish despite the water's famous "colour". Pelicans, herons, egrets, seagulls and terns were all feasting. To be specific, the egrets were "great egrets". The other American types, "reddish", "snowy" and "cattle", definitely don't come this far north, yet.

Egrets and heron actually belong to the same family, *Ardeidae*, and are really just distinguished by their colour. And they differ from storks, cranes, ibises and spoonbills in that their necks are retracted in flight. They are freshwater and coastal, so anything small enough and aquatic is fair game for tucker.



Egrets – a poem by Judith Wright

Once as I travelled through a quiet evening,
I saw a pool, jet-black and mirror-still.
Beyond, the slender paperbarks stood crowding;
each on its own white image looked its fill,
and nothing moved but thirty egrets wading -
thirty egrets in a quiet evening.

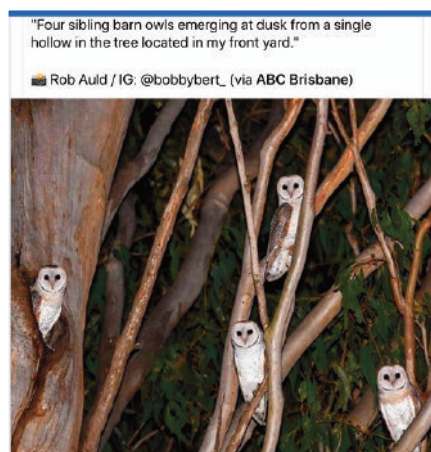
Once in a lifetime, lovely past believing,
your lucky eyes may light on such a pool.
As though for many years I had been waiting,
I watched in silence, till my heart was full
of clear dark water, and white trees unmoving,
and, whiter yet, those thirty egrets wading.

[poetry [Link](#)]

Crow update – classes are on hold due to camping trips and yardworks, but my friend still shows up daily and gets a peanut or two.

Reader feedback ...

Malcolm W. shared this picture of "wisdom".



And **Roger L.** sent an article [link] that shows that "bird brain" should be used as a compliment – they're smart! He also shared the observation that there is a bird smarter than the crow – the channel-billed cuckoo that distracts the crow while his lady friend nips in and lays an egg in the crow's nest (see *Birds I view*, June 2018 *Yarn*).



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